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ABSTRACT

A major criticism leveled at professional education faculty appears to be that their elementary or secondary school experience is often outdated and inadequate. The purpose of this study was to explore the validity of this criticism. A questionnaire designed to investigate the qualifications and elementary secondary teaching experience of teacher education faculty was sent to 62 public and private schools of education in Texas. The following activities were listed most often by the respondents as avenues through which professional education faculty remained familiar and up-to-date with elementary and secondary practices: (1) supervision of student teachers and interns: (2) inservice programs: (3) various types of field based programs: and (4) teacher center interaction between university faculty, elementary and secondary teachers, and school administrators. It was concluded that the professional education faculty members surveyed were well qualified educationally for preparing elementary and secondary teachers. (JD)

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QUALIFICATIONS OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION FACULTY

by
Clarence L. Darter, Jr.

Competency is a word that has become very familiar to teachers and the public during the last few years. Many articles and papers have been written and published exploring the competency of students and teachers. Too many students are not doing well on achievement tests. It is not uncommon to read in a newspaper or journal that many teachers are not competent to perform the job that needs to be done with students as they prepare to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.

Competency in teacher preparation has also come under the scrutiny of many segments of society. Professional educators are expressing growing concern about preparing teachers to meet the demands of a constantly changing society. It is, therefore, essential that teacher education faculty have professional qualifications and experience to meet emerging needs of their constituents. The major criticism leveled at professional education faculty seems to be that the elementary or secondary school experience of too many is outdated and inadequate.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the validity of this criticism by presenting the results of a study concerning qualifications of professional education faculty. A questionnaire designed to answer questions about the professional qualifications and teaching experience in elementary and secondary schools of teacher education faculty was sent to the sixty-two public and private colleges and universities that prepare teachers in Texas. Thirty-six, or 58.1 percent, colleges and universities returned usable questionnaires.

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The results are based upon a total of 586 professional education faculty from these institutions. Concerning academic preparation, the education faculty are well qualified since the terminal degree is held by 498 of the educators, or 85 percent. Table I contains a breakdown of the elementary and secondary expereince of professional education faculty.

Table I

Years of Experience in Elementary and Secondary Schools of Professional Education Faculty

None	1-2	3-4	5-9	10 and over
35	55	99	197	200

A study of the information contained in Table I suggests that education faculty have had experiences in elementary and secondary schools. Ninety-four percent have had this experience before taking positions in colleges or universities. The majority, 67.7 percent, had five or more years of experience. These results are not surprising since thirty-three of the schools responded that it was essential for prospective full-time education faculty members to have elementary or secondary school experience. The other three schools did not answer the question.

The last year the 551 education faculty worked in elementary or secondary schools is shown in Table II.

Table II

Last Year in Which Education Faculty Worked in Elementary or Secondary Schools

Before 1970	1970-74	1975-80
324	133	94

The figures in Table II reveal that 227 faculty members, or 39 percent have had experience in elementary or secondary schools within the past 10 years. The first impression presented by these statistics is that the criticism leveled at professional education faculty has merit since 61 percent in this study had their elementary or secondary experience more than 10 years ago. However, all respondents from the thirty-six institutions stated that their institutions were well aware of their responsibility in producing teachers, administrators and other support personnel who were adequately prepared to face the challenges presented by schools of today. In fact, twenty-one of the institutions responded that they regularly or occasionally hire elementary or secondary school personnel on a semester or school year basis. This experience can be stimulating and enriching to the teacher and to the university faculty members with whom there are opportunities for interaction.

Recognizing that faculty have an obligation to their constituents to remain familiar with current activities in the field, the institutional respondents listed many opportunities available to education professors. These faculty involvements ranged from field based program activities and serving as consultants or members of public school evaluation teams to programs where a college or university faculty member exchanges assignments with a public school teacher for a semester or a year. The following activities were listed most often by the colleges and universities as avenues through which professional education faculty remained familiar and up-to-date with elementary and secondary practices:

1. Supervision of students teachers and interns
2. Inservice programs
3. Various types of field based programs
4. Teacher Center interaction between college and university faculty, elementary and secondary teachers and school administration personnel

In addition to the activities listed above, it is significant to note that one institution had several faculty members spending two hours each week, or every other week, in a public school acting as substitute teachers. Other institutions mentioned that, on occasion, their faculty substituted in elementary or secondary schools, gave demonstrations, and served as resource persons.

Of the many involvements listed by the respondents from the colleges and universities, the one that has rarely been used but offers much potential is the exchange of personnel. The elementary/secondary teacher or administrator can bring the practicalities of the school situation to the higher education environment. On the other hand, a college or university professional education faculty member could take his expertise and latest research findings to the public or private school classroom or administrative position.

Mr. William J. Leary, superintendent of the Rockville Centre Union Free School District, made the case for an exchange program between faculty in educational administration programs in universities and their field-based colleagues in public and private schools.[1] He maintained that this approach would have advantages for both groups, mainly because each individual would be exposed to a different type of environment with all its related opportunities and problems. As a result, those involved in the exchange could develop a greater appreciation and understanding of work and responsiblities of other educators.

Midwestern State University and the Wichita Falls Public Schools participated in an exchange program during the 1977-78 school year. A tenured professor of education served in the public schools as coordinator of their five-year development plan and as coordinator of media services. The public school

administrator involved became a member of the professional education faculty at the university teaching secondary education classes and supervising student teachers. In addition to bringing a current practioner's view to teacher education students, the public school administrator had numerous opportunities to interact and work closely with secondary education faculty. These interactions were enlightening and stimulating. At the end of the school year experience, an evaluation session was conducted. The concensus was that the professional exchange had been successful. Both the university personnel and public school personnel agreed that they had profited by the different viewpoint brought to their respective institution by the exchange individuals. As a result of this experience, relations between personnel of the two institutions have improved through increased respect for the skills and abilities of each other and development of a better understanding of the activities, responsibilities, opportunities and problems encountered by each institution.

An analysis of the results leads to the following conclusions:

1. Professional education faculty members are well qualified educationally for preparing education personnel.

2. Faculty are also well qualified in relation to elementary and secondary experience since two-thirds of them have had at least five years of experience. Although 62 percent have not had this experience within the past 10 years, the college and university administrators indicated that their professional education faculty have ample opportunities to remain abreast of a constantly changing elementary and secondary environment. In fact, faculty are expected to have interaction with teachers and administrators from elementary and secondary schools on a regular basis.

3. When hiring full-time education faculty members, the colleges and universities search for those who have had elementary or secondary teacher experience.

4. Colleges and universities have demonstrated a willingness to hire elementary and secondary school personnel for a semester or academic year. This is advantageous to both the institution and to the teacher since a better understanding develops of the opportunities and problems of different levels of the educational system.

The information gleaned from the questionnaire completed by higher education institutions of varying sizes presents evidence that professional education faculty have had elementary or secondary school experience and are continuing to remain involved with these schools. Thus, faculty background and their continued involvement with schools presents a solid base from which professional education personnel work to prepare teachers and other school personnel for a rapidly changing society.

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1. Leary, William J., "Public School Administration and Academe," Phi Delta Kappan, Vol 62 Number 1 (September, 1980), pp 29-30.